

**GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE, PRAYAGRAJ**  
**WORKSHEET- 3**  
**SESSION: 2020-2021**  
**CLASS : 12<sup>th</sup> D**  
**SUBJECT: SOCIOLOGY**  
**CHAPTER 2 : RELIGION AND SOCIETY (Part I)**

**Introduction:** Man is not only a social being but also a religious and spiritual being and Religion is a major concern of man. It is one of the earliest and deepest interests of the human beings. **Religion is universal, permanent, pervasive and perennial interests of man.** Man not only has biological, economic, and social needs, but also , what is known as a religious need. He has a **religious quest** which makes him to become restless even beyond the satisfaction of his basic physical needs. Hence the Biblical saying, Man cannot live by bread alone. It is also said that man from the earliest times has been incurably religious.

Throughout history, and in societies, past and present, religious narratives, symbols, traditions, beliefs and practices are not uniform but are an attempt to give more meaning to life and understand the universe. **Religion revolves round man's faith in the supernatural forces.** It is a concrete experience which is associated emotions, especially with fear, awe or reverence. Many societies have a wide range of institutions connected with religion and a body of special officials, with forms of worship, ceremonies, sacred objects, tithes, pilgrimages, etc.

Although religion is largely a matter of personal faith, religious identity of an individual in India is often expressed at the social plane. On a number of occasions such as mass festivals and rituals one finds manifestation of religious identities. Faith of different religions also exhibit a '**community feeling**' leaving to conscious or unconscious expression of solidarity. Moreover, common code of social conduct based a on a religious faith also leads to a public expression of a particular religious identity like, a dress pattern, avoidance of certain food items and several others with some regional variations.

**DEFINITIONS OF RELIGION :** Though religion is a universal phenomenon it is understood differently by different people. There is no consensus about the nature of religion and sociologists are yet to find a satisfactory explanation of religion. Writers have defined religion in various ways.

1. **According to Durkheim : ( In his book *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* ) –**  
**“Religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things that is to say, things set apart and forbidden”**
2. **According to James G. Frazer : ( In his book *The golden Bough* ) –**  
**“Religion is a belief in powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life”**
3. **Edward Sapir ( *An American Anthropologist said* ) –**  
**“The essence of religion consists in man's never- ceasing attempt to discover a road to spiritual serenity across the perplexities and dangers of daily life”**
4. **MacIver and Page : “ Religion as we understand the term, implies a relationship not merely between man and man but also between man and some high power”**

## **BASIC COMPONENTS OF OF RELIGION:**

1. Belief in supernatural forces
2. Man's adjustment with the supernatural forces
3. Acts, defined as righteous and sinful or sacred and the profane
4. Some methods of salvation

### **Religion as a System of Belief**

All religious organizations depend upon beliefs, knowledge and training to exercise influence upon their members. Religious belief tries to explain the nature and origin of sacred things. Even a visible and touchable sacred object would be just an ordinary object if it were not for belief. **Eg. There is nothing to distinguish a sacred cow from any other animal, except the faith of the Hindus who regard the cow as sacred.**

### **Religion as a System of Ritual**

Religious ritual is the practical side of religion. It strengthens and supports the individual's faith in the world. It helps him to give expression to his religious sentiments and emotions. According to *Durkheim* "The function of religious rituals is to affirm the moral superiority of the society over its individual members and thus to maintain the solidarity of the society".

As *M. Douglas* in his *Purity and Danger*, 1966, says **ritual refers to symbolic actions concerning the sacred.**

**Eg. Ritual when performed together (when Muslims do Namaz together in a Mosque, Christians their Prayers in a Church & Hindus their Bhajans in a Temple) by several individuals, become effective as a unifying factor.**

## **THE SACRED AND THE PROFANE**

### **• What is Sacred?**

Seven qualities of sacred as described by Durkheim

- a. It is recognized as a power or force
- b. It is characterized by ambiguity (is open to more interpretation, explanation, meaning)
- c. It is non – utilitarian (it is based on faith and beliefs, while utilitarianism is based on rationality)
- d. It is non – empirical (not relying on data or evidence, it is faith driven)
- e. It does not involve knowledge of any rational or scientific character
- f. It strengthens and supports worshippers
- g. It makes moral demand on the believer and worshipper

The sacred quality is not intrinsic to objects but is conferred on them by religious thought and feeling. "The sacred does not help one to manipulate natural forces and is useless in practical sense. It is not even an experience based on knowledge and the senses, but involves a definite break with the everyday world"

1. God as Sacred
2. Ghost as Sacred
3. Moral or Philosophical Principle as Sacred
4. Totem as Sacred
5. Supernatural Force as Sacred

### **• What is Profane?**

The Profane is mundane, that is, anything ordinary. It is a part of the ordinary realm rather than the supernatural world. The profane or ordinary or unholy embraces those "ideas, persons, practices, and things that are regarded with an everyday attitude of commonness, utility and familiarity"

### **The Constituents of religion :**

1. Beliefs
2. Rituals
3. Superstitions
4. Taboo

### **Differences between Religion and Science**

<b>Religion</b>	<b>Science</b>
1. It is a system of beliefs	It is a system of knowledge
2. It hampers progress	It promotes progress and development
3. People skeptic and are not allowed to certain things	People have skeptical attitude
4. The universe works according to the will of God	The universe works on the basis of laws derived from observation
5. It is a pursuit of non-empirical/ non-verifiable truth	It is a pursuit of empirical and verifiable truth

### **Similarities between Religion and Science**

1. Science is a gift from God
2. Every advancement in Science is also an advancement in Religion
3. Two compatible things can explain the same phenomenon
4. Science and religion should not compete but rather respect each other
5. Both religion and science can become very dangerous if put in naïve hands
6. Both science and religion try to answer ultimate questions in life
7. Fossils placed on earth by God is a test of faith

## **THEORIES OF RELIGION**

1. **ANIMISM** – E. B. Tylor’s theory indicating the power of soul, ghosts, illusions, imaginations, hallucinations, etc. It is essentially a belief in the spirit of the dead.
2. **NATURISM** – All the natural objects are to be worshipped as they have enormous power to bless or curse man.
3. **TOTEMISM** – A tribe is supposed to be related to an object – mainly animal or plant (totem) towards which they behave in a reverent manner by adopting its name and offering it sacrifices or adoring it.

### **FUNCTIONALIST THEORIES OF RELIGION**

**Malinowski, Radcliffe Brown and Durkheim** have proposed the functional explanation of primitive religion i.e., the idea that social and cultural cohesion are a function of the interdependence or interactions of institutions of society.

- A. Malinowski’s Theory:** He believed that religion helps man to get rid of stress and strain. He considers religion as a device to secure mental and psychological stability in an individual’s life. He feels, when functioning for a social life people fail to cope up with problems. They search for an absolute power which can help them to overcome all problems and offer them solutions in an *inexplicable* (impossible to explain) manner. Human mind always suffers from pain and tension and it seeks a relief from the same, then religion is made to bring about a readjustment between man and the supernatural in upset state of existence.

**Eg. Trobriand Islanders organize religious ceremonies mainly during the time of fishing expeditions which is the main activity of the tribe and around which the pressures and tensions revolve all the time.**

**B. Radcliffe Brown's Theory:** Radcliffe Brown observes from a different angle as he says that religion is emerged to instill a sense of dependence in it. To him, the individual should learn to depend on society through some rituals and behavioral norms. He feels religion is not a device to save individual from his individual stress and strain rather it is to assure a social solidarity(bond of unity) and homogeneity( similar or same opinion ).All the members of a particular society come close to one another and share their failures and expectations by practicing religion.

**Eg. Mahalis worship ' Surji Devi ' or Sun God sacrificing chickens, pigeons, goats etc. and after the rituals they take the food together.**

**After every twelve years the Mahalis worship 'Surji Devi' for the welfare of the village.**

**Also they worship 'Dharam God' together to show their gratitude towards the soil after harvesting the crops.**

Their practices show that religion is the instrument to combine the people on some common cause and they show reverence to the supernatural spirit being united thereby accepting the functional role of religion. That's why Radcliffe Brown believed that religion is for social cohesion and stability.

**C. Emile Durkheim's Theory:** Durkheim also emphasizes the functional aspect of religion and thus, he stresses on the beliefs and rites. He believed that religion is a social practice to develop a 'right society' in place of a wrong one. He offered two important concepts viz, *sacred and profane*. In every tribe a distinction is made between these two.

He is of the opinion that **the positive beliefs referred to God is related to SACRED and profane consists of magic or pseudo-science (false/ fake)**. Some activities are performed as compulsory in every religion (SACRED) and some others are forbidden (PROFANE).

**Eg. Mahalis worship 'Surji Devi' as a joint performance and offer several animals – this is SACRED. On the other hand, in each family it has its own deity 'Orak Bonga' nothing is told to the outsiders about this deity, thus anything to others is PROFANE.**

**While studying Australian tribes he discovered the young men among them are taught normal laws through sacred ceremonies.** Thus, religion is a part of social activities comprising right or wrong, good or evil and guiding the functions of the respective societies.

*Thus, religion has a definite purpose to train the people with social behaviors and religion is not related only to supernatural forces which do not have any direct contact with real social life.*

#### **Reference Books:**

1. Sociology-Principles of Sociology with an Introduction to Sociological Thought by C N Shankar Rao
2. An Introduction to Sociology by Vidya Bhushan and D.R.Sachdeva

#### **Websites:**

1. [www.acidrayn.com/2011/05/18/comparing-similarities-between-science-and-religion/](http://www.acidrayn.com/2011/05/18/comparing-similarities-between-science-and-religion/)

**Note: Parents please ensure that your ward refers to the Reference Books and Websites for 2 days to read the topics.**

**I. Answer briefly each of the following questions:**

1. What is Superstition?
2. What is Taboo?
3. What do you understand by the term Functional Theories?
4. What is Naturism?
5. What is the basic difference between Religion and Science?
6. Define Sacred.
7. State two similarities between Religion and Science.
8. Define Totemism.
9. What do you understand by the term Profane?
10. Explain any two qualities of the Sacred.

**II. Answer the questions in detail:**

1. Analyze E. B Tylor's theory of Animism.
2. Define Religion. Discuss the four basic components of Religion.
3. How are Radcliffe Brown and Malinowski's functional theories on religion different from each other?
4. Discuss religious beliefs and religious rituals.
5. Discuss the theory of Religion by Emile Durkheim.

- THE END -